



Changes! Changes, Changes.

Recent Changes at Metropolitan Social Services: A Backdrop

In May 2004, Maximus released its final report, including recommendations, based on an independent performance audit of the Metropolitan Social Services (MSS) Department. Primary objectives of the audit were:

- For significant operations within each Social Service division, determine how program effectiveness, performance and efficiency are monitored.
- For all major operations in all divisions, determine which functions are performed in-house and which, if any, are outsourced and determine whether the current arrangements represent good practices in terms of service delivery, business risk and cost.
- Assess the appropriateness of the educational and certification requirements for staff and the effectiveness of the overall organization structure.
- Determine how effective the Social Services Department is at coordinating among its divisions and coordinating with other Metro, State and not-for-profit agencies. Determine if Social Services is duplicating services and/or competing with any of these agencies.
- Determine which Metro departments and outside entities provide services to the homeless population.

Meet with representatives from those groups and from homeless advocacy groups and assess the level of coordination, collaboration, competition and redundancy in those services. Identify unmet needs. Using best practices and homeless services in other cities that have high levels of effectiveness, develop recommended improvements in Nashville's services to the homeless.

- Assess the overall management of the Social Services Department, including operating and financial procedures and controls and information technology systems.
- Develop findings and recommendations for any areas where performance could be improved.
- Assess the overall management of the Social Services Department, including operating and financial procedures and controls and information technology systems.
- Develop findings and recommendations for any areas where performance could be improved.

Moreover, the department hired a new executive director, effective October 1, 2004.

In keeping with the audit recommendations, the following changes have taken place at MSS.

- ⇒ Knowles Home and Adult Day Care have been transferred to the Hospital Authority.
- ⇒ The Disability Information Office has transferred to the Metropolitan ADA Compliance Office.
- ⇒ The Child Care Center has been transferred to the McNeilly Center for Children.
- ⇒ Closing of Richland Village Community Services Program.
- ⇒ Transfer of the Family Assistance component of MSS to Metropolitan Action Commission (MAC).
- ⇒ Closing of the Refugee Services program, though it has a new vendor through the state Department of Human Services in Associated Catholic Charities.
- ⇒ Transfer of the MSS Transportation Program to Metropolitan Transit Authority.
- ⇒ Current Homemaker and Nutrition Programs are part of a pilot project which examines the effectiveness of service delivery for MSS and an outside contract agency.
- ⇒ Implementation of a new business model, effective July 1, 2005.

Inside this issue:

Recent Changes at MSS: A Backdrop	1
Change in Organizations	2
Measuring Perceptions about Changes for MSS	2
Which Change Stage for MSS Staff?	3
Job Titles	4
References	4

Board of Commissioners

Linda Mattson, Chair

Gwen Harris, Vice Chair

Glenn Carter, Ph.D.

Leonard Bradley, Jr.

Dot Dobbins

Jose Gonzales

Barbara Toms

Gerri Robinson, Executive Director

Change in Organizations

***“People don’t resist
change—they resist
loss!”***

- Kennedy Information, Inc.

A typical assumption in organizations is that people move forward when change occurs. However, such thinking could not be further from the truth.

Most people go through at least four stages of emotional change when they experience a major shock like change in the organization (Kennedy Information, Inc., 2005; Riches, 2005). Experiencing change, including that encountered by MSS staff, is like the grief one experiences following the loss of a beloved relative, pet, or friend.

“People don’t resist change—they resist loss” p. 1. The initial reaction is disbelief and denial and there may be expressions of fear and sadness. Then they move to anger and blame, which means people resist. Here there is lots of anger, maybe even depression surrounding the perceived loss. Once

people move to the next stage of acceptance, there are still reservations. This is “surface” acceptance. Individuals can just as easily revert to the anger and blame expressions of Stage 2 (Kennedy Information, Inc., 2005; Riches, 2005). Commitment is the fourth and final stage, and varies from individual to individual. In fact, the impact of unwanted change is often a mixed bag. (Riches, 2005). Each employee’s personal history, blended with their MSS environmental experience, will produce different attitudes toward change (Leadership—Change, 2005).

Measuring Perceptions about Changes for MSS

From October 5 through November 4, 2005, MSS staff were given the opportunity to tell the Board and senior management what they thought about changes in the organization and whether they had adjusted to or established a comfort level with the new business model. Because of the issue surrounding job titles that surfaced during discussions about the new social work legislation and the fact that some MSS staff could be affected, feedback was solicited on this issue as well.

Staff feedback was obtained through a brief 16-item survey. Several items provided demographic information such as gender, tenure with MSS, tenure with Metropolitan Nashville Government, race/ethnicity, and age. Three items were open-ended, allowing staff to respond, in their own words, about what is working well at MSS and what could stand some tweaking. Staff could also offer suggestions to the Board about any action it decides to take in reference to the new

social work legislation.

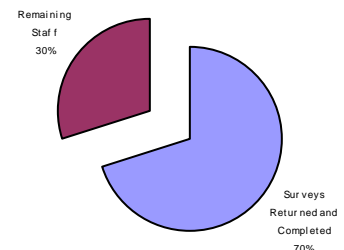
The survey was distributed via email. Supervisors left stacks of surveys for staff who did not have email access.

MSS has 101 positions, but only 87 were filled during the time of survey administration. Four staff were on extended leave during this period and six were members of the senior management team. As a result, the total possible $n = 77$. The chart shows a 70 percent response rate, which is well beyond the minimally acceptable rate of 50 percent. This means that 54 staff returned completed surveys.

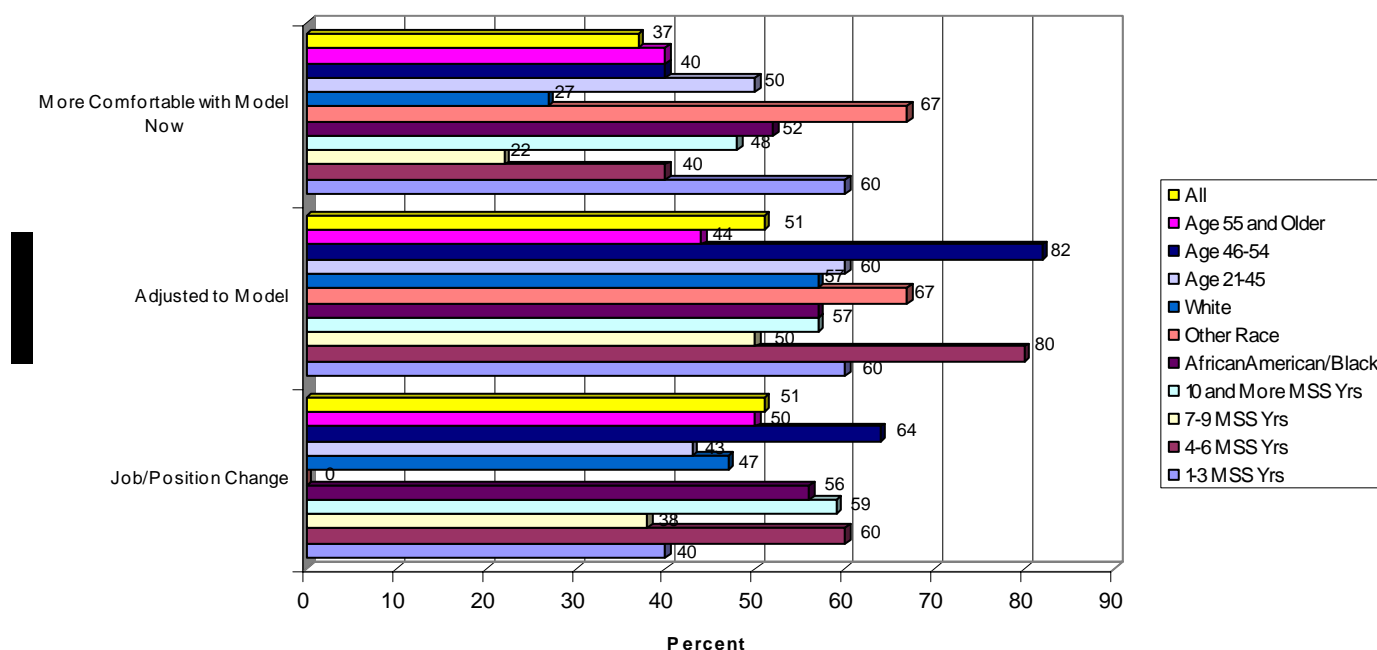
The research design did not account for duplicate responders by precoding the surveys. The surveys were not precoded because the administration was more like being web-based than a mail out. Further, not having precoding increased the trust factor between the researcher and responders. Anonymity and confidentiality

had been promised, so not being able to email particular people, as with precodes,

Staff Survey Response Rate
Issues of Change and Job Titles



Metropolitan Social Services Staff Survey Results - Business Model Items Percent Responding



Which Change Stage for MSS Staff?

Nearly 80 percent of responders have been with MSS for at least seven years and slightly more have been with Metropolitan Nashville Government an equivalent number of years. Almost 60 percent identified themselves as Black or African American and about the same percentage are middle age (46 years and older). Females comprised 88 percent of the respondents.

More than one third of the responders in any category reported they had to change their job responsibilities or their position as a result of MSS moving to the new business model. Overall, half of the respondents have personally experienced change within the organization. Research says that even people on the periphery of change are impacted, not just those directly affected. For example, a co-worker's role changes so that s/he is now in a new department. Not only is the co-worker affected, but

so are you and those in the new department (Riches, 2005).

When asked if they had adjusted to the new business model, Black/African American staff and those in the 46-54 year old age group were most likely to respond in the affirmative (at least 80 percent of persons in these categories). Staff 55 years and older and those who had been with MSS between seven and nine years were the least likely to respond positively to the adjustment question; however, their percentages were near or equivalent to 50 percent.

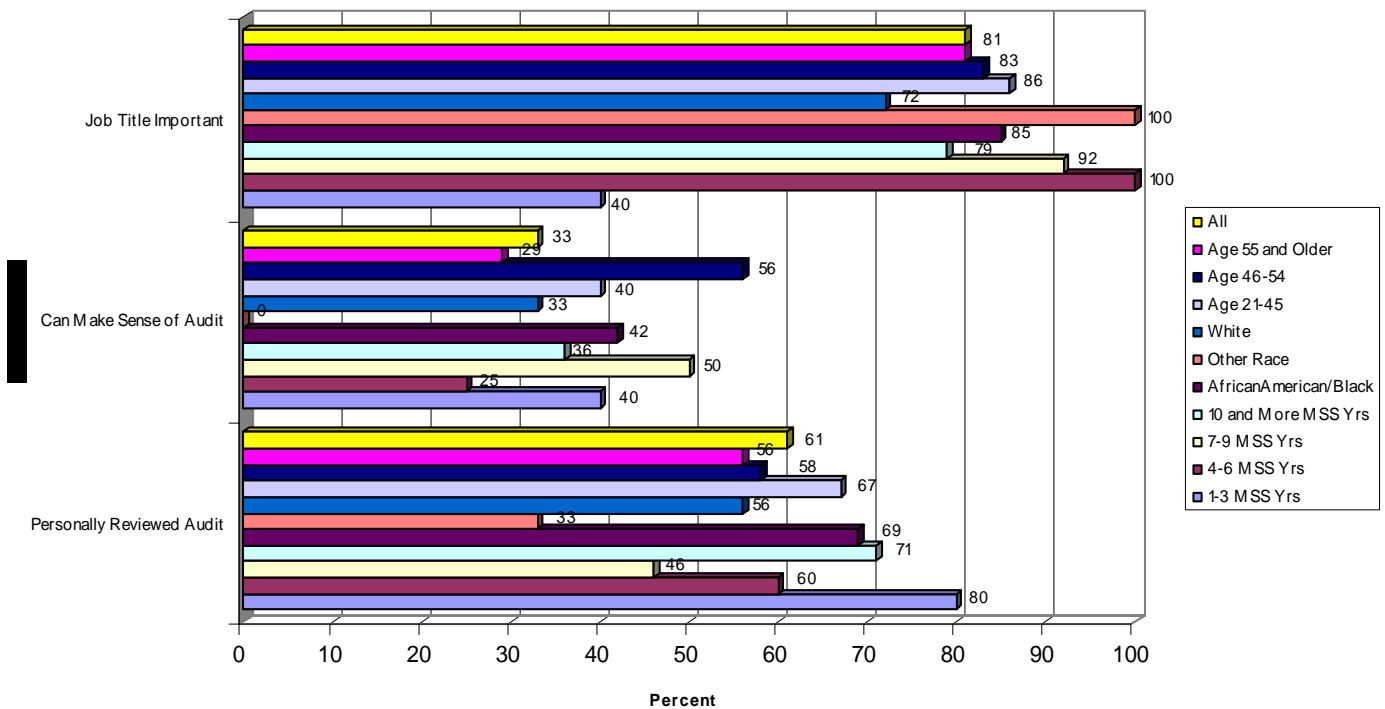
Staff may be in the reluctant acceptance stage. The comfort-level question is a sign that all is not as well as we would like it to be. With the exception of one category, percentages of persons who say they are more comfortable now with the new business model than they were one year ago are

much lower than the adjustment figures. In some cases, the comfort-level percentages fall to almost half that for adjustment.

Another sign may be the fact that not as many staff as anticipated have personally reviewed the audit findings. Overall, only 60 percent have achieved this goal. The fact that even smaller percentages (one third, overall) say they can make sense of the audit further points to the support that staff needs at this time.

Research says that encouragement and support are essential in the reluctant acceptance stage. Now is a great time to consider training for staff, along with engendering their participation in planning and program development (Kennedy Information, Inc., 2005; Riches, 2005).

Metropolitan Social Services Survey Results - Audit and Job Title Items Percent Responding



Job Titles

We continue to research issues that surfaced during conversations about the new social work legislation that is scheduled to go into effect on July 1, 2006. There are numerous positions the MSS Board can take. Among those mentioned most frequently are supporting a grandfathering amendment to the law or investigating a change in job titles for MSS employees affected by the law.

Beyond the issues of change that MSS staff have and are experiencing, the researcher wanted to get their position on job titles. A question was posed to all responders and phrased thusly: "How important is your job title to you?" There were two options dealing with the importance of job titles and two that basically categorized job titles as unimportant. The difference in each set of two items was one of degree.

Across all categories, it is clear that job titles are important to staff, ranging from 72-100 percent. Overall, better than

80 percent chose an "important" option.

These results support the premise the "people care about their job titles." In fact, there is evidence that some people will choose to have a better job title over a higher salary/wage. Gregory P. Smith, a business performance consultant who has written numerous books and been featured on television programs such as Bloomberg News, says "people want to be proud of their job titles. He further contends that job titles can improve retention. National volunteer organizations also tout the positivity of job titles. "Titles provide status and can impact self-esteem." , p. 1 (VolunteerToday.com, 2005).

*"People care about their job titles
People want to be proud of their job
titles."*

- Gregory P. Smith

References

- Kennedy Information, Inc. (2005). Managing change, Executive Career Strategies, 1 (33).
- Leadership—Change. Retrieved on November 14, 2005, from the web at <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leadchg.html>.
- Riches, A. Organisational change and leadership development: The four emotional stages of change. Retrieved on November 14, 2005, from the web at <http://www.anneriches.com.au/article-ct3.html>.
- Smith, G.P. (2005). Does the 'deli lama' work here? The power of a job title can build pride and improve retention. Business Know-how. Retrieved on November 14, 2005, from the web at http://www.businessknowhow.com/manage/job_title.htm.
- Titles for volunteer positions. Retrieved on November 14, 2005, from the web at <http://www.volunteertoday.com/ARCHIVES2000/Aprilrecrui00.htm>.